



Northwest Portland Parking District

Annual Report 2019–2020



PBOT
PORTLAND BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION

The Story of the Northwest Portland Parking District

Northwest Portland is a dense neighborhood, in close proximity to the Central City, that attracts many residents, visitors, and employers. The neighborhood's continued growth necessitates ongoing management of transportation and parking.

The Northwest Portland Parking District (NW Parking District), located roughly within NW Vaughn Street, I-405, W Burnside Street, and NW Cornell Road, was created in 2013 when Portland City Council adopted the Northwest Parking Management Plan.

The NW Parking District was created to:

- Bridge the gap between parking availability and demand
- Support a full range of transportation options within the context of neighborhood livability and economic vitality
- Efficiently manage parking
- Reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles

Parking management strategies include: time limit signs, the Zone M parking permit program, parking meters, parking enforcement officers, and a collection of transportation demand management strategies and policies that reduce or redistribute travel demand.

We Are In Our Seventh Year

In 2014, the Northwest Parking District Stakeholder Advisory Committee (NW Parking SAC) was formed. The committee is comprised of Northwest residents, business owners, and employees, and advises the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) on transportation and parking management in the NW Parking District. Among its 13 members are four representatives from the Northwest District Association (NWDA), four representatives from the Northwest Business Association (NWBA), and five at-large members.



What COVID-19 Has Meant for the District

The effects of COVID-19 are profound, with recurring lockdowns, restricted business practices, and remote schooling to name just a few of the ways the economy and culture have shifted since the start of the crisis. These shifts have had ramifications for driving behavior, and the future holds many unknowns.

Switching Gears to Support Area Businesses

Before the pandemic, demand for parking was increasing. In 2018 alone, 900 new housing units and dozens of new businesses opened their doors. COVID-19, however, brought parking demand down rapidly, signalling a drop in visitors to the area that hurt area businesses. PBOT responded by adapting its on-street parking system to a changing set of pandemic-era priorities.

For instance:

- Business owners were given **on-street parking validation vouchers** to offer customers as an incentive to revisit the area.
- **Healthy Business permits**, which allow business owners to expand their operations to the on-street parking spaces in front of their establishment, were put into circulation. The Healthy Business program affected 83 on-street stalls in the NW Parking District, according to the 2020 off-street Parking Study.
- **COVID-19 parking permits**, which provided additional accommodations for residents and employees affected by COVID-19. The temporary program provided a helpful bridge between parking permit expiration dates and renewals.

Did COVID-19 Create an Outlier Year, or a Lasting Shift?

To gauge the success of our programs, PBOT's Parking Division collects and tracks parking data on an annual basis. Needless to say, the data from 2020 is uncharacteristic when compared to prior years, with meter revenue, occupancy (how many parking spaces are occupied at one time), and turnover (how long unique vehicles are parked) all showing a sudden and deep decline.

As restaurants and shops reopen to welcome guests, businesses and organizations whose employees were able to work remotely may not go back to pre-pandemic "business as usual." Instead, it seems, many employees will continue working from home and the need for employee parking could be greatly reduced. The parking landscape may also be affected by workplace layoffs and permanent closures.

As we emerge from the pandemic, will parking trends revert to their pre-COVID trajectories? Or, has parking demand (and parking demand management) in the NW Parking District been permanently altered?



▲ When operational restrictions were mandated in accordance with CDC social distancing guidelines, Healthy Business permits from PBOT allowed restaurants to add seating outside, into space that would otherwise serve as on-street parking.

NW Parking District Projects

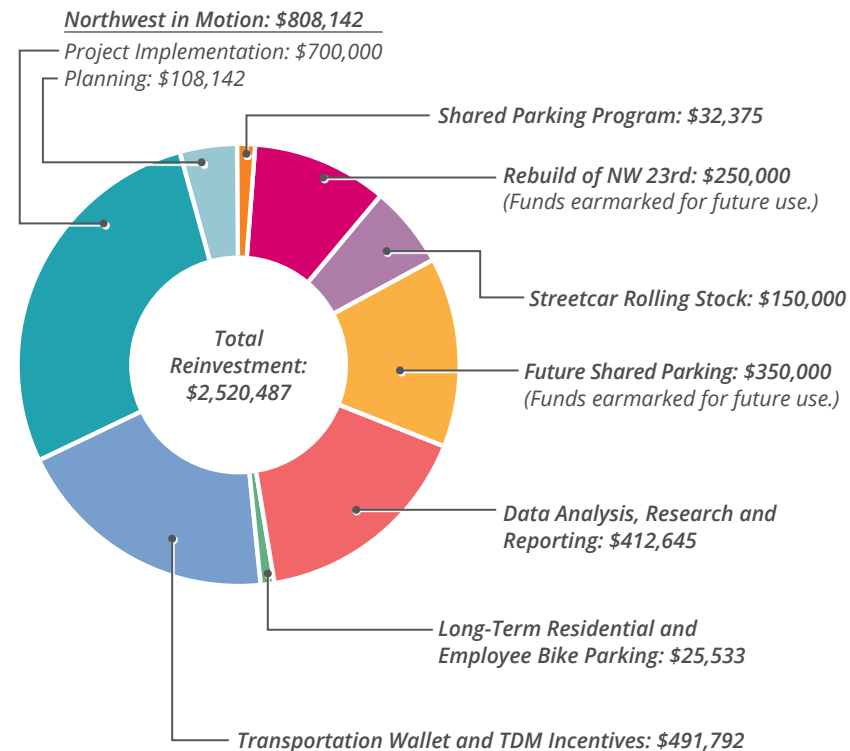
Project Funding

NW Parking District funding and comes from two key sources:

- **The \$120 surcharge on Zone M parking permits that are not income-based.** City code requested that this is used to encourage a shift away from single occupancy vehicles and to fund parking studies.
- **51% of new meter revenue from the meter district.**

These funds are allocated once annually.

New Meter Revenue and Permit Surcharge Reinvestment 2016–2020



Northwest In Motion (NWIM)

Northwest in Motion (NWIM) was adopted by City Council in October 2020 to make Portland's NW Parking District safer and more convenient for walking, biking, and taking public transit.

The plan identifies 27 projects to prioritize over the next five years, and lays out an implementation and funding strategy to see the projects through. It also recommends several street classification updates that will support its objectives.

NWIM Project Types and Timeframes, 2020–2025



The NWIM plan has provided NW Parking SAC a framework for prioritizing the allocation of funds over the next five years.

The Pedestrian Lighting Study

The Pedestrian Lighting Study will help PBOT identify and enhance lighting in Northwest to ensure people can walk the district safely and comfortably. During the first phase of the study, which kicked off in 2020, a task force was convened to review lighting standards, city code, and best practices. Then, they underwent an assessment of existing street lighting with engineers.

This project is being undertaken in tandem with the NWIM plan, which represents over two years of analysis, community outreach, and problem solving to improve biking, walking, and public transit.

The Northwest Bike Parking Fund

Under the The Northwest Bike Parking Fund, PBOT provides up to \$5,000 of bike parking equipment, per property, to local building owners. To participate, property owners provide bike parking space and pay for the installation of the equipment.

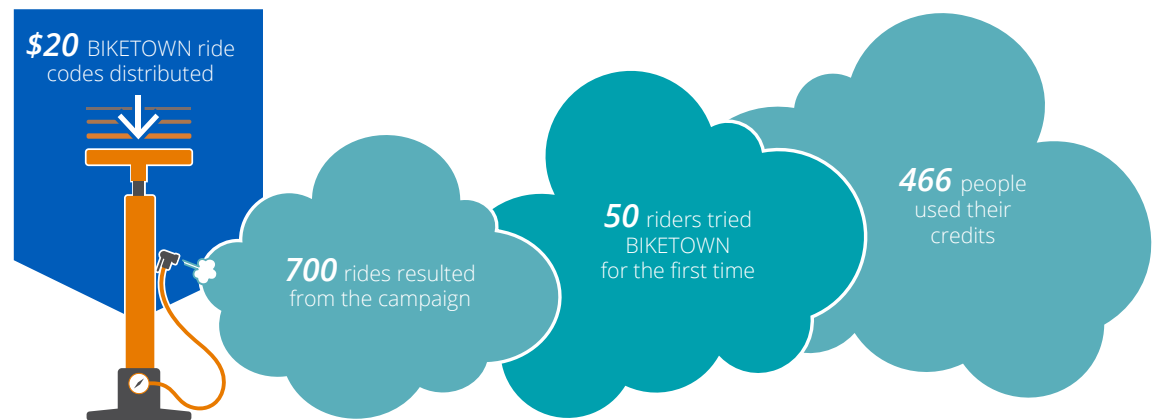
Research Projects

A number of ongoing research projects inform parking policy in NW, including:

- An annual parking assessment and permit analysis;
- An annual survey of off-street parking in multi-family buildings;
- A study of the effectiveness of the event restricted parking area by Providence Park, where special meter hours and pricing ease parking demand on game days.

BIKETOWN NW Boost Campaign

In 2020, PBOT added a new fleet of electric pedal-assist bikes (e-bikes) to BIKETOWN, Portland's bikeshare rental program. Later in the same year, NW Parking SAC approved funds for a local "boost" campaign that encouraged residents and employees to use BIKETOWN.



▲ Well-lit streets and reliable transit make travel on foot more appealing, especially at night.

Photo credit: [Ian Sane](#)

The Transportation Wallet

The Transportation Wallet is a package of discounted transportation services including TriMet, Portland Streetcar, BIKETOWN, and e-scooters. It is designed to reduce traffic congestion and alleviate parking demand by encouraging travel via public transit, by bike, and on foot.

Valued at \$672, this package can be accessed a variety of ways.

- **Residents** may purchase Transportation Wallets for \$99 or get them for free in exchange for their area parking permits.
- **Businesses** may purchase Transportation Wallets for \$99 or receive them for free or at reduced rates in return for Zone M parking permits.
- **Employees** can purchase Transportation Wallets for \$99.

The Golden Transportation Wallet

In an effort to ensure that City programs serve all Northwest residents, PBOT and the NW Parking SAC partnered with Home Forward to introduce the FREE Golden Transportation Wallet. It is specifically for residents on reduced incomes.

In 2020, 108 Golden Transportation Wallets entered circulation in the NW Parking District, representing a full 20% of Transportation Wallets distributed. This is a big step forward in our effort to serve Portlanders equitably.

New Mover Transportation Wallet

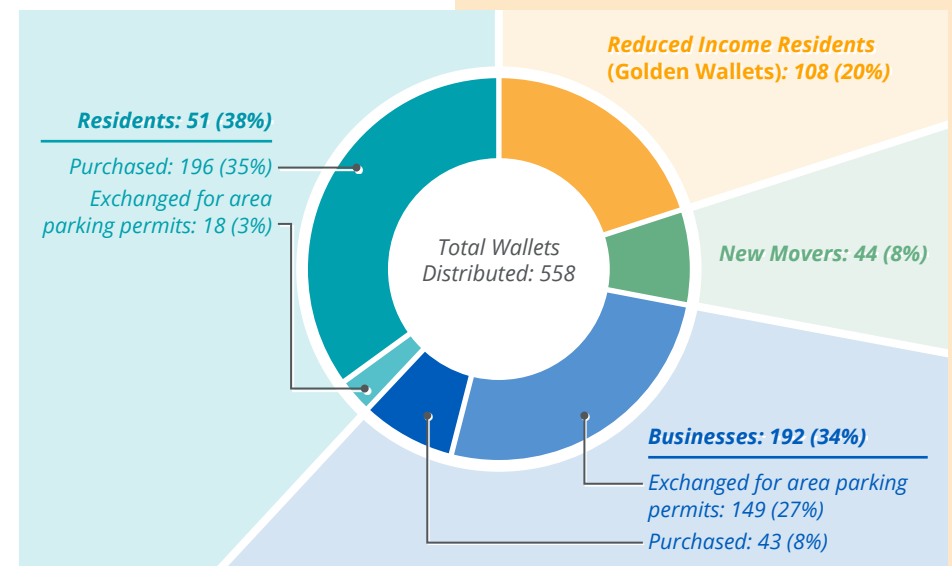
With outreach support from property managers throughout NW, we encouraged new residents to park off-street *or* eschew their cars altogether by offering them FREE Transportation Wallets.

Those who do not buy parking permits are eligible for this one-time incentive.



▲ BIKETOWN passes are included in the Transportation Wallet, which became available to NW Parking District residents in 2017.

Transportation Wallet Distribution (by Recipient)



Off-Street Shared Parking

The NW Parking District is home to eleven off-street lots that offer more than 500 parking spots in total. Some lots are open to the public all day. Others are owned by businesses or institutions that need the parking only at certain times of day.

Via the Shared Parking program, PBOT and the NW Parking SAC are reducing on-street parking demand by making more efficient use of existing off-street parking. For instance, city code was changed to allow privately owned lots to operate commercially as shared parking facilities during their proprietors' off hours.

The Northwest Business Association (NWBA) also joined forces with PBOT to make off-street parking easier to find. Together, we developed a website and launched an outreach campaign of flyers, window clings, and coasters to share resources about off-street parking and travel via public transit, on foot, and by bike.



- ▲ PBOT, NW Parking SAC and the NWBA distributed these coasters to raise awareness of off-street lots.



- ▲ Metered parking signs were updated to show block-specific Parking Kitty codes.

Parking Sign Update

Parking Kitty, the City's parking app, grants users the convenience of paying for parking from a smartphone. Originally, users' parking rates were determined when they input the code from the sign. However, In 2020, PBOT introduced a performance-based parking program that will determine parking rates based on demand. This approach will stabilize demand for parking across the city over time by offering lower parking rates in less in-demand areas, and higher rates in more in-demand areas.

Under the new program, there is a distinct, Parking Kitty code for *every block-face* within a meter district, rather than a single code for an entire district. This allows PBOT to pinpoint where parking is taking place to better manage parking. The entire family of meter district parking signs were replaced to reflect the code change.

Parking Meters in the NW Parking District

Meters are powerful tools that manage parking demand by increasing turnover, freeing space up for visitors, employees, and residents. They also make enforcement more efficient and effective. 2020 saw a couple notable, meter-specific changes in the NW Parking District.

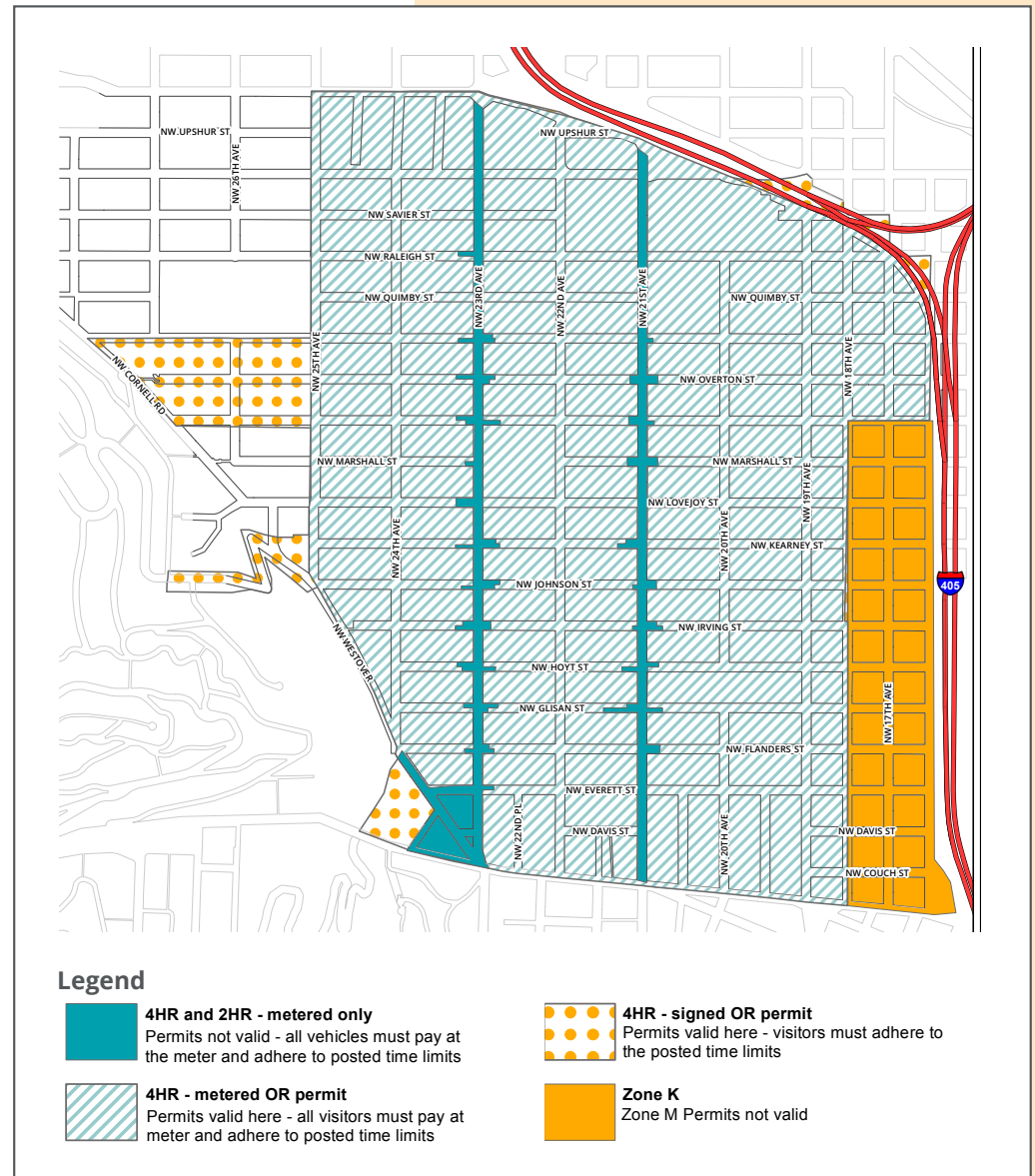
A New Meter Area Was Added

In 2018, NW Parking SAC voted to add meters to an unmetered area in which, according to study data, finding a parking space was particularly difficult. This change was implemented in 2020.

The meters were added between NW 20th Avenue and NW 16th Avenue to the east, from NW Irving to I-405 to the north, and between NW 24th Avenue to 25th Avenue. Furthermore, new time limits were added to align with the rest of the NW Parking District.

Overall, Meter Transactions Decreased

Between January 1, 2019 and November 30, 2020, there was a 45% decrease in meter transactions in Northwest Portland. The average total decrease for all meter districts was 53%. This decrease is linked in part to the pandemic.



The NW Portland Area Parking Permit District

The Zone M permit program began in 2015. It was designed to stymie the number of NW and downtown employees who park in residential areas and then finish their commute on foot. In 2018 the program was adapted to the number of permits issued and encourage alternatives to traveling by car. This program saw no changes between 2019 and 2020.

NW Parking Permits 101

Residential Permits

- Permits cost \$195 and are offered at \$75 for those living on lower incomes.
- Newer buildings are restricted as to the number of permits their tenants can purchase. This policy encourages developers to include off-street parking in their plans. Permits are limited to one per licensed driver, with a maximum of three per household.
- If a resident has off-street parking on their property, they may not be eligible for a permit.

Business Permits: Rules for Employers

- Business permits are offered at \$195 each.
- Businesses can purchase up to 80% of FTE but are capped at 50 permits unless an exception is granted by the SAC. Additional permits cost \$390 each.

Income-Based Residential Permits

Of the 2,568 Residential Permits allocated in NW in 2020, 42% were income-based permits. This means they were provided to residents living on incomes equal to or less than 80% Area Median Income. These individuals are not required to pay the \$120 surcharge associated with residential permits. Making parking permits affordable to residents with lower incomes is one of the steps we're taking to make City programs equitable across the board.

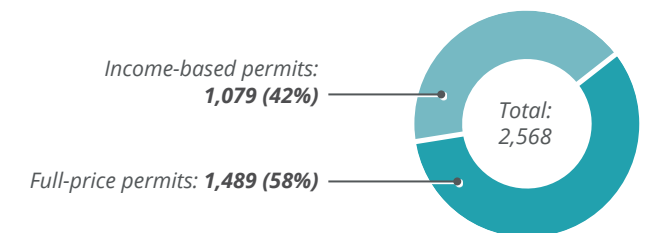
NW Parking District Permit Sales, 2017—2020

Since 2017, permit sales in NW have dropped 35% overall. Business Permit sales are down 38% from 2017 and Residential Permit sales are down 33% from 2017.

	Business Permits	Residential Permits	Total
2017	3,386	3,600	6,986
2018	3,321 (▼1.9%)	3,195 (▼11.3%)	6,516 (▼6.7%)
2019	2,401 (▼28%)	2,558 (▼20%)	5,314 (▼24%)
2020	2,096 (▼12.7%)	2,418 (▼5.5%)	4,514 (▼9%)

(▲x%) (▼x%) -- Represents year-over-year shift.

2020 Residential Permit Distribution, By Income

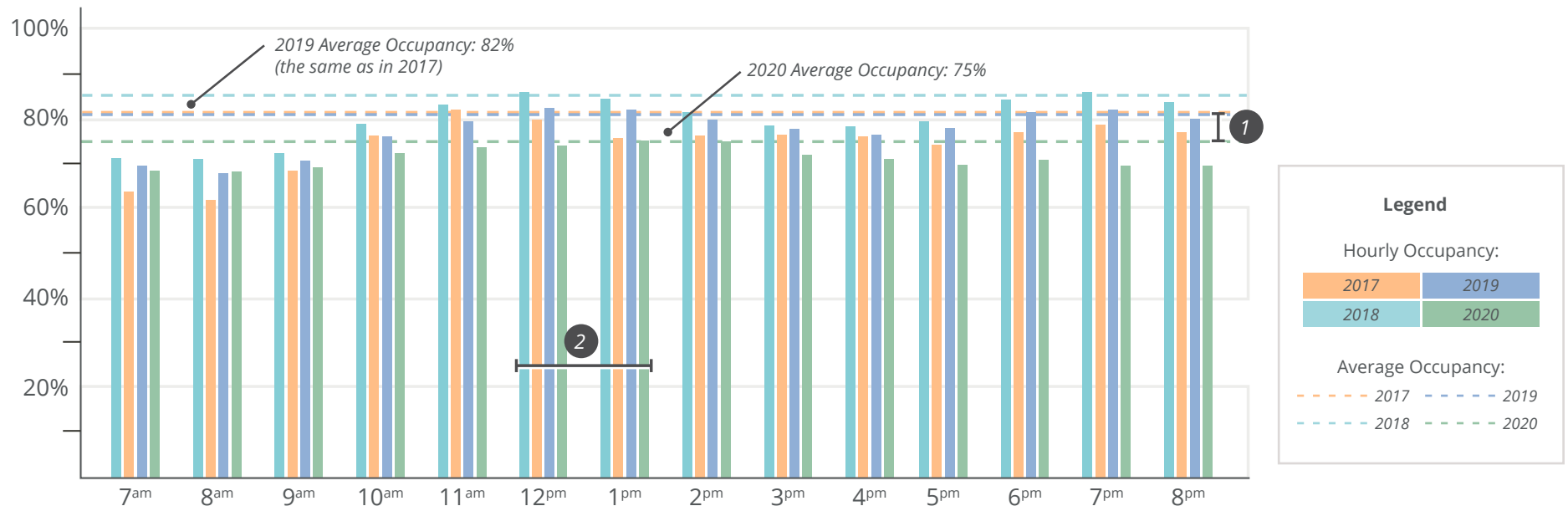


Occupancy and Utilization

On-Street Parking Occupancy

When it comes to parking, “occupancy” measures how full parking is and how many vehicles are parked. Ideal on-street parking occupancy is 85%, which means 1-2 spots per block are open.

Hourly Occupancy, 2017-2020



1 Average, hourly occupancy decreased 7% between 2019 and 2020.

This means that district parking spaces were less full, less often than in 2019. Parking qualified as “constrained” (over 85% capacity) on two out of every five blocks.

2 In 2020, peak occupancy occurred from noon to 1pm.

The 12pm peak matches up with the midday peak seen in previous study years.

However, in previous study years, there was a second peak from 7–8pm, coinciding with the time at which meter hours ended and competition for parking between visitors and residents was highest. The fact that there was no evening peak in 2020 could be attributed to a change in behavior brought about by COVID-19 restrictions on restaurants and other businesses that draw evening-time visitors.

Utilization (Turnover or Parking Duration)

When we refer to “utilization”, we are talking about the number of vehicles parked in a given area and how long they stay there.

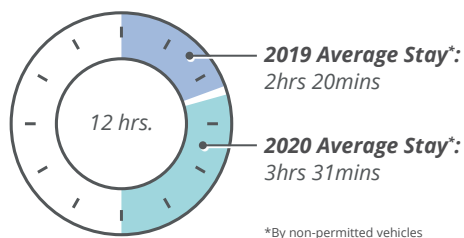
The data we gathered in 2020 to gauge the efficacy of our parking management efforts was markedly off-trend compared to previous years. We are unsure about the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic permanently changed driving and parking behavior in the NW Parking District. We may find that the utilization goals we set before the pandemic need to be recalibrated for a post-pandemic landscape.

Parking Duration

Cars stayed parked for longer and violated posted time limits more often than in 2019.

Our data shows that, in 2020, people left their vehicles parked in the same stalls longer than they did in 2019, regardless of whether that stall was metered or not. In fact, overall meter violation rates in surveyed spaces doubled, going from 8.4% in 2019 to 16.3% in 2020.

Non-permitted vehicles' average length of stay went up by about one hour and ten minutes between 2019 and 2020.



Turnover in 2-Hour Metered Stalls

2020 Average Turnover:
4.75 (cars per stall, per day)



In 2020, turnover was 5% below the industry target for effective parking enforcement.

The industry target for turnover—one measure of a healthy parking system—in two hour stalls is five vehicles per day.

About This Data

The occupancy and utilization data was collected by Rick Williams Consulting in November 2020 and is published in the [NW Parking District Parking Assessment and Permit Analysis Executive Summary](#) in March 2021.

Looking to the Future

The Transition to Online Permits

Starting in 2021, PBOT is launching a new online parking permit system in Zone M. This is a pilot that is being rolled out across Portland's parking permit zones, replacing both paper applications and paper permits.

In the new online system, customers will apply for permits, submit verification documents, pay, and manage their permits digitally. The system uses license plate numbers as virtual permits and Parking Enforcement enforces the permits through the license plate number.



▲ PBOT's new online permit system will eliminate paper permits.

Implementation of Pedestrian Lighting

The Pedestrian Lighting Study has identified where lighting needs to be installed or enhanced to ensure the comfort and security of people traveling by foot in the NW Parking District.

In 2021, we will start acting on the findings of this study.

Off-Street Demand and Feasibility Study

In 2021, the NW Parking SAC Supply Subcommittee and PBOT will launch a study to gain deeper insight into the need for off-street parking in NW Portland. The goals of the study are to:

- Understand the demand for parking in NW as well as the people using parking in the district.
- Evaluate the need for increased and/or new parking supply.
- Establish objective, data driven goals for future off-street parking amenities.

Learn More

We invite the public to learn more about the NW Parking District.

Information about projects discussed in this report, the NW Parking SAC, and SAC meeting times and minutes can be found on The City of Portland's website:

www.portland.gov/transportation/parking/northwest-parking-district

Contact Us

If you have questions or comments about this report or projects in Northwest District, please contact:

Rae-Leigh Stark (she/her)

NW Parking District Liaison

503-823-7211

rae-leigh.stark@portlandoregon.gov